

LIFE SKILL EXAMPLE BOOK • 08

Agency

Recognize your room to influence, choose and act.

A WORKING DEFINITION

Agency is the capacity to recognize one's room for influence, make deliberate choices, initiate action, take responsibility for consequences, and expand other people's ability to act within real constraints.

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IN PRACTICE

Names what can be influenced, chooses a meaningful direction, takes a proportionate next step, learns from the result and keeps ownership visible.

It is

Choice and action within real conditions.

Both personal and relational.

Strengthened through evidence of influence.

Accountable for effects and consequences.

It is not

Total control over outcomes.

Relentless action or individual heroics.

Ignoring power, resources or constraints.

Blaming people for conditions they cannot change.

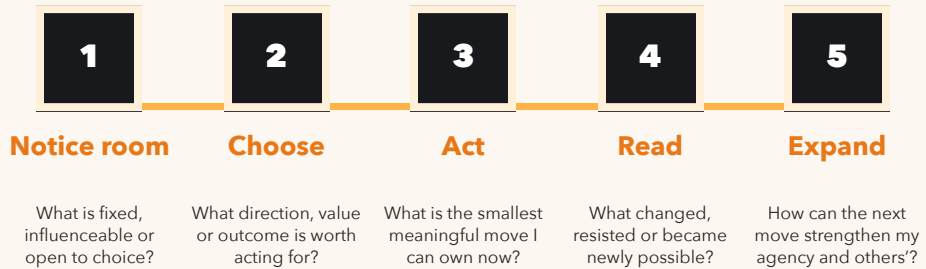
WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

When tools can recommend, generate and automate, people can gradually stop initiating, deciding and owning consequences. Agency keeps technology in service of intentional human action.

THE CAPABILITY LOOP

Agency grows through an influence loop.

Confidence alone is not agency. A person needs choice, action, feedback and an environment that permits meaningful influence.



CHOICE What can I decide? Name a genuine option, boundary or request.	ACTION What will I own? Translate intention into a visible next move.	INFLUENCE What changed? Use real feedback to update efficacy and strategy.
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BEHAVIOR CLUE

Names what can be influenced, chooses a meaningful direction, takes a proportionate next step, learns from the result and keeps ownership visible.

8 CONNECTED CAPABILITIES

Agency is a system.



Influence awareness Distinguishes control, influence and external constraint.	Choice recognition Sees alternatives instead of treating the first path as fixed.
Initiative taking Starts meaningful action without unnecessary prompting.	Decision ownership Accepts responsibility for choices and consequences.
Self-efficacy Builds realistic confidence from mastery and feedback.	Action orientation Moves from intention to concrete, proportionate steps.
Adaptive follow-through Changes strategy while maintaining meaningful direction.	Collective enablement Strengthens other people's voice, choice and capacity to act.

The components strengthen one another. Development depends on how they are combined in context—not on maximizing one behavior in isolation.

WHY WE PROTECT THIS SKILL

Three signals—three different questions.

	Human Core How central should human agency, judgment and responsibility remain?	 Human owns Signal 5/5
	Future Readiness How strongly does this help people learn and act as roles and technology change?	 Foundational Signal 5/5
	Safeguard Value How strongly does this protect capability from over-reliance, deskilling and loss of agency?	 Critical safeguard Signal 5/5

READ THESE AS STRATEGIC SIGNALS

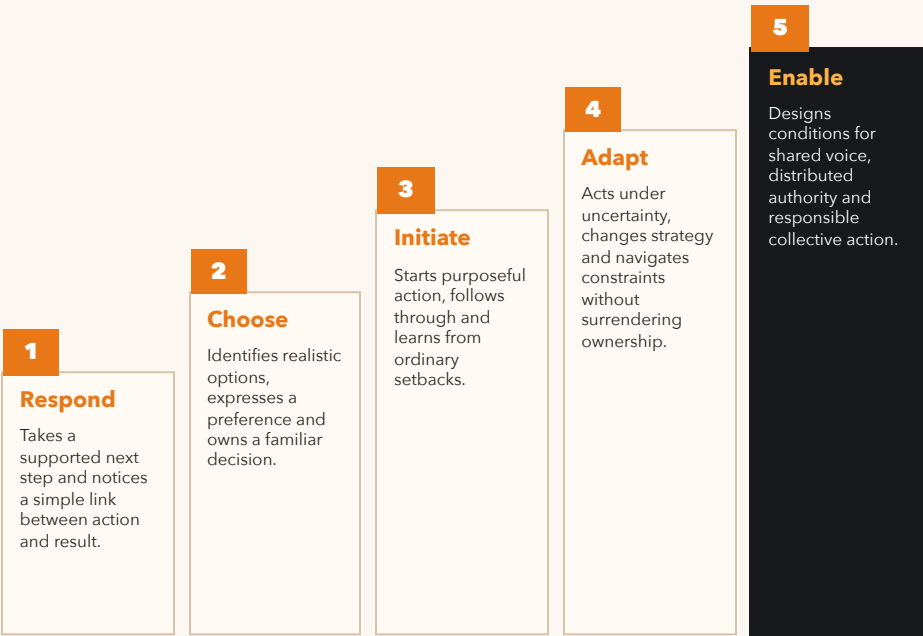
They describe why the capability matters—not how advanced a learner is.

AI can widen options and reduce friction. People must choose the direction, authorize action, own consequences and protect others' room to participate.

LEARNING PROGRESSION

Five stages of enacted agency.

The progression describes observable choice and influence—not confidence, status, personality or worth. Agency always depends partly on the surrounding conditions.



USE THE PROGRESSION WELL

Ask for the next observable behavior—not a label for the person.

BEHAVIOR MAP

What agency looks like around a challenge.

01

Before

Map the room

Separates what is controllable, influenceable and currently fixed.

Name the direction

Connects the action to a value, purpose or needed result.

Find the choice

Identifies at least two genuine options or requests.

Check permission

Distinguishes a real boundary from an assumed need to wait.

02

During

Take one owned step

Makes the next action visible and proportionate.

Use voice

States a view, boundary, request or decision clearly.

Seek leverage

Engages people, resources and systems that can change the situation.

Track the response

Notifies effects without confusing effort with influence.

03

After

Own the outcome

Names choices and effects without blame or self-erasure.

Update efficacy

Uses evidence—not mood—to judge what can be influenced.

Change the strategy

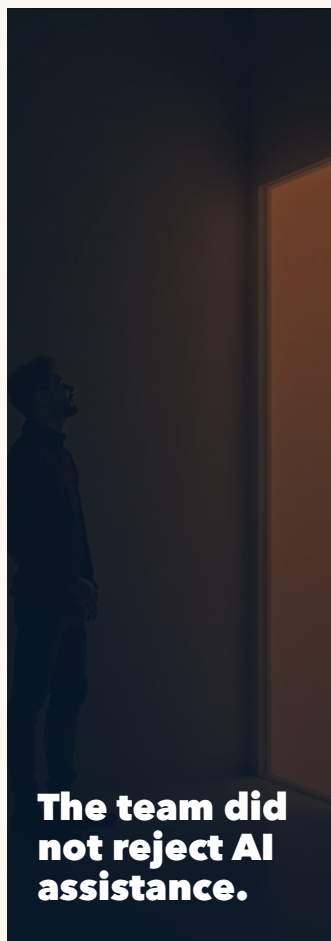
Keeps direction while revising an ineffective method.

Share the room

Creates more voice and choice for affected people.

CASE STORY · COMPOSITE

When the AI assistant becomes the unofficial manager.



The challenge. A project team uses an AI copilot to prioritize work, assign next steps and draft decisions. Output rises, but people increasingly wait for recommendations and nobody can explain who authorized the trade-offs.

1 • Notice room

The team maps which decisions require human mandate, consultation or professional judgment.

2 • Choose

They name the intended outcome: faster coordination without surrendering ownership.

3 • Act

One sprint uses explicit human decision owners, visible assumptions and opt-out routes.

4 • Read

Fewer tasks stall, and disagreements surface earlier because authority is no longer hidden in the tool.

5 • Expand

The team adds rotating initiative roles and invites affected colleagues into consequential choices.

CAPABILITY IN PRACTICE

The team did not reject AI assistance. It restored visible choice, authority and responsibility around the assistance.

A PRACTICAL PROTOCOL

Create SPACE to act.

Use this short structure in real work, reflection or coaching. Keep the action specific enough to observe.

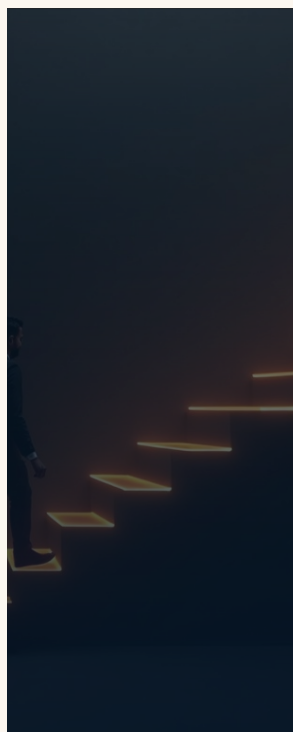
S See the room What is fixed, influenceable or open to choice?	P Pick direction What outcome or value is worth acting for?	A Act small What meaningful next move can I own now?	C Check effect What changed, resisted or became possible?	E Enlarge agency How can the next step strengthen others' room to act?
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One-minute start: “I may not control ... I can influence ... The next move I will own is ...”

The protocol supports practice. It does not remove the need for context, expertise, ethical judgment or appropriate human support.

LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING CULTURE

Create room to act—and accountability for what follows.



CLARIFY Make decision rights, boundaries and escalation routes explicit.

INVITE Give people meaningful choices before plans become fixed.

RESOURCE Match responsibility with time, information, skills and authority.

REWARD Recognize initiative, responsible dissent and learning—not only compliance.

REVIEW Examine choices and system conditions without turning accountability into blame.

AUTONOMY RESEARCH · 2020

A meta-analysis of 73 self-determination-informed health interventions found modest, heterogeneous improvements in motivation and health behavior. Gains were linked partly to need support and autonomous motivation.

Ntoumanis et al., Health Psychology Review. [R1]

SELF-EFFICACY RESEARCH · 2024

A preregistered meta-analysis of 115 studies with 11,284 teachers found interventions improved teacher self-efficacy. The authors recommend reflective elements and more rigorous intervention descriptions.

Täschner et al., Review of Educational Research. [R2]

SEVEN-DAY EXPERIMENT

Run a seven-day agency experiment.

- Day 1** Choose one situation where you have been waiting, avoiding or assuming there is no room to act.
- Day 2** Map what is controlled by you, influenceable with others and currently outside reach.
- Day 3** Name two genuine choices and the value or outcome each would serve.
- Day 4** Take one small action: decide, request, propose, decline, prototype or escalate.
- Day 5** Record what changed and what the response teaches about your actual influence.
- Day 6** Adjust the strategy and take a second owned step with appropriate support.
- Day 7** Share one choice, resource or decision right that enlarges another person's agency.

MY AGENCY RECORD

What I cannot control:

What I can influence:

The action I will own:

How I will enlarge agency:

Track behavior and evidence. Reflection matters when it changes the next action.



AGENCY • HUMAN CAPABILITY FOR CHANGE

Agency begins before certainty.

See the room you have. Choose a meaningful direction.
Take the next owned step. Learn from the response—and
help others act.

Source note. GMB Skillspathfinder agency note and SKILL 2.0 Personal Agency Rubric. [R1] Ntoumanis et al., Health Psychology Review. [R2] Täschner et al., Review of Educational Research. Composite case created for learning use.